

THE ARHEOTIM ARCHAEOLOGY PORTAL. PROMOTING ROMANIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCE ON THE INTERNET

ABSTRACT

The Romanian archaeological patrimony is one of the richest ones in Europe, but it is not sufficiently popularised. The ARHEOTIM archaeology portal provides a way to integrate the Romanian archaeological values in the great European patrimony.

Following the footsteps of important archaeological portals, already acknowledged at an international level, ARHEOTIM wishes to fill an empty page on www Romanian space.

The structure of the portal is a didactic one, addressing primarily to college students but also to all those interested in archaeology. ARHEOTIM includes approximately 2000 links grouped in 12 categories: Regions; Techniques/Methods; Themes; Epochs; Theory; Artefacts; Romanian archaeology; Personalized pages; Maps/Images; Portals/Directories; Archaeology for children; On-line magazines.

In order to be a genuine guide in archaeology, ARHEOTIM also includes a section referring to the Methodology of suffering and interrogation in www, a specialized Forum for discussions, an Electronic Magazine and an internal Search motor.

The most interesting chapter however, is the one referring to projects undertaken by History and Archaeology Study Centre (CSIATim), which has as a goal the familiarization, at a medium level, of the archaeological sites in western Romania.

Within this project 2 multimedia products are presented: e-Tibiscum and e-Praetorium.

Both web pages are complex projects that combine written text with sound, image and 3D modelling in an attempt to offer an image as clear and complete as those provided by the best archaeological sites concerned with Greco-Roman civilization, in western Romania.

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GENERAL PRESENTATION

Romania is one of the European countries, which are least represented on the Internet in the field of archaeology. This is why the existence of a Romanian archaeology portal has become a necessity, now that different pages that popularize the Romanian archaeological sites are being published. However, there is not yet a modality to group and classify these pages into one accessible shape. Although shy attempts to create a Romanian portal¹ were made in the past, the projects have remained unfinished to this day.

ARHEOTIM (<http://www.uvt.ro/csiatim/arheotim/index.htm>) is meant to be a complex archaeology portal, realized within a project of the Centre of History and Archaeology Studies Timisoara (CSIATim)² by local specialists with the Centre's own resources. The Server that hosts the portal is that of the West University of Timisoara, and is administered by the Department of IT and Communications³ within the University.

ARHEOTIM promotes any initiative to publish on the Internet pieces of information connected to archaeology from within and outside our countries borders. It is open to any kind of collaboration with Romanian or international institutions in the field.

The main objective of ARHEOTIM is to promote the Archaeological Science at regional, national and international level by publishing specialized scientific articles in its own Electronic Journal "ArheoVest". Other ways of promoting are publishing WebPages with archaeological themes (digging reports, scientific monographs, popularization papers, didactic papers, courses for students etc.), as well as the inauguration of a Specialized Discussions Forum in the field of archaeology. Through this Forum, the Romanian or foreign specialists may exchange opinions, ideas and information connected to their job profile.

ARHEOTIM is addressed to the specialists in archaeology and to the students that study this science. This is why it also presents didactic elements connected to the methodology of navigating and evaluating a webpage, as well as bibliographical and webographical references for those who want to study further this domain.

The structure of the portal was conceived by accumulating several ideas already put into practice by other European portals that belong to this field. There was a desire to achieve a simple and aerated graphic, without complex dynamic presentations that would require special resources for navigation and search.

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The fundamental concept underlying this portal was its practical function, in an attempt to offer the specialists (and archaeology amateurs in general), Romanian or foreign, a useful, easy to use instrument, where they may find all types of information connected to archaeology. The portal is created in Romanian language, but in order to facilitate the access of foreign users, the technical terminology was preserved in English, with which the Romanian users are already familiar.

Since ARHEOTIM is not limited to the promotion of research done by the CSIATim specialists, but it is also meant to be a promoter of archaeological science in general, several common inter-institutional research projects have been initiated. In this direction, a first contact was established with the Museum of Banat (from Timisoara), which has a special section in the Home Page of the portal. Therefore, an attempt is made to elaborate common projects, to publish digging reports of the Museum specialists, to publish thematic WebPages with monographic profile.

A special concern of those in charge with ARHEOTIM is the promotion of specialized papers (monographs or other types of documents with a scientific character) of the researchers in the domain of archaeology. There are 3 perspectives in this direction:

- a. the publishing of lists of papers edited by certain specialized institutions;
- b. promoting scientific papers through the publication of certain abstracts;
- c. actual publishing of certain specialized papers in electronic format.

ARHEOTIM PRESENTS THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

[1] The Categories section of the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal

There are 82 domains from the area of archaeology which are presented hierarchically, and are classified according to the international standards respected by almost all archaeology portals: Regions, Techniques and Methods, Themes, Epochs, Theory, Artefacts, Romanian Archaeology, Personal WebPages, Maps and Images, Portals / Directories, Archaeology for children and Online Journal.

Although there is no strict rule in this sense, 12 thematic domains are however accepted. The sub-domains may vary according to the complexity and dimension of the portal. There are also known and accepted several dozens types of software for webpage making, the usage of any of them being left to the decision of the web master. For the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal, the program used was a licensed HTML editing program, with a FrontPage 2002 interface, realized by Microsoft. For the good functioning of the portal, no complex graphic elements or Java or C.S.S. (Cascading Style Sheets) were introduced. Thus any type of browser may quickly open the portal without requiring further resources. All the scientific data concerning a certain webpage are presented under a tabular form so that the user may have the whole image of the recording. The user can easily identify the name of the web-

page, the language in which it is written, the classification and the elements of multimedia it includes. The legend of the graphic symbols used in the description of the web document is present at the foot of the page. In order to keep the aesthetic aspect and not to force the user to navigate too much on the vertical axis to obtain the needed information, the table was limited to 20 recordings. The preferred variant is the creation of more pages which are numbered at the heading and the foot of the table. The user can navigate every 20 recordings through the hyperlinks.

Since it is a didactic portal, the only elements considered necessary to be published here were the name of the page, the language in which it is written, the type of document and the elements of multimedia it includes. The URL address is hidden within the name of the page, but in the future we will attempt to publish a short description for every registered webpage.

[2] The Methodology section of the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal

The Methodology section of the portal refers mainly to students and to those who do not master the methodology of navigating, searching and identifying the useful information in an Internet directory.

This section makes available for the user the general criteria of identification and selection of a scientific (or useful) webpage, according to the international standards, drawing attention upon the copyrights that protect the text, sound and images included in the electronic document: the accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency and coverage of the web documents.

[3] The News section of the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal

The News section presents periodically (once a month) the new publications from the archaeology domain which can be edited in an electronic format or in a classical format.

The pieces of news are short, strictly informative in the form of short articles, along the text (or images), the coming out date of the item of news and the source of documentation are presented.

- a. classic documents - an informative summary (in the case of a long article) or an informative note (if it is a piece of news) is presented. The source is also mentioned with the author, title, page, publishing house and publishing year.
- b. electronic documents - a summary or an informative note is presented. The source is mentioned with the author, title, web address. The web address is interactive, the user being able to log on directly with a simple click on that particular address.

The ARHEOTIM will constantly keep in touch with the professional institutions and organizations of history and archaeology in the country, to whom it will present in a special section the exhibits organized, the organized debates and meetings, the publications, the scientific activities in general.

The Museums will have a special status, the section destined for them presenting the permanent exhibits and the temporary and itinerant exhibitions.

The political debates, the Symposiums, the Congresses or any other scientific manifestations from the archaeology domain, with regional, national or international character will have a special presentation in a section destined for this particular purpose.

[4] The e-Journal section of the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal

The e-Journal section makes available for the users a specialized electronic journal "ArheoVest" edited by the Centre of History and Archaeology Studies Timisoara with a biannual edition, that wishes to promote scientific research through the publishing of articles and studies in the domain of archaeology and that of connected disciplines. Permanent sections: Archaeology and History, Modern Methods and Techniques in Archaeology, Digging reports, Interdisciplinary Studies, Book review, others. Scientific coordinator: Doina Benea, Ph.D.

The articles will have a scientific or didactic character and will be edited in PDF format. The necessary program for visualizing and printing is Acrobat Reader 5.0. The text of the articles will be written in a European language of circulation or in Romanian with a summary in a European language.

Although the team is young and this is the first project of this type, the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal is meant to become, in a short period of time, an instrument appreciated both in Romania and abroad. A new graphic and a new way in processing data using PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) are already in progress. This is also the case of multimedia facilities, which are now being improved.

[5] The Forum section of the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal

The Forum section of the portal offers the students, specialists and amateurs in archaeology the possibility to contact and notify each other (in writing) on different themes concerning archaeology, in an environment provided by online services.

The users may create their own account and password and may choose the theme of discussion (about the portal, about archaeology, about archaeological news or didactic element) and then they may send a written text to the portal, just as an e-mail.

The discussion Forum is based on a newsgroup selector that allows the user to choose from the list the theme (s)he is interested in. ARHEOTIM uses a simple discussion Forum, displaying the information in an unrolling list on 3 main fields:

- the title of the message.
- technical data: e-mail address and the forwarding date.

- the counting of the number of readers and of the number of answers.

The actual reading of the text is done by activating the title of the message in a new window that also offers complete data of the author.

[6] The Research section of the ARHEOTIM Archaeology Portal

The Research section has 2 spheres of interest: the projects of the CSIATim team (WebPages to popularize the regional archaeology, digging reports, different projects) and the links to the Romanian and international research institutes.

- a) The projects of the Centre of History and Archaeology Studies Timisoara. WebPages meant to popularize the regional archaeology: e-Tibiscum (the Roman camp, the military vicus and the Roman town of Tibiscum - called nowadays Jupa, in the Caras-Severin county, Romania) and e-Praetorium (the Roman camp and military vicus from Praetorium - called nowadays Mehadia, in the Caras-Severin county, Romania). Several other projects are in progress: The Dacians in Banat, The Roman Legions in the Province of Dacia, The villa rustica at Dalboset (in the Caras-Severin county, Romania), and The Neolithic Site at Dudestii Vechi (in the Timis county, Romania).
- b) Institutions and organizations of archaeology from Romania and abroad. Here the main Romanian and international institutions and organizations belonging to this profile are presented in alphabetical order.

E-TIBISCUM

The Roman archaeological complex at Tibiscum in the locality Jupa, Caras-Severin county, is one of the largest ones in Western Romania. The area filled with archaeological load spreads on about 27 ha, of which only 5 % have been excavated. Still, the diggings that have been done so far, showed the general aspect, the evolution phase and the economic and spiritual aspects of the Roman camp, the military vicus and the Roman town at Tibiscum.

The webpage of the e-Tibiscum project structured the entire information known so far, in the form of a monograph based on digging reports, the articles and the monograph published by the director of the site and the team of archaeologists. The monograph comprises 6 sections with a historical and archaeological character (Introduction, The Roman Camp, The Vicus, The Town, The Economic Life, The Spiritual Life) and 6 sections with a technical character (Glossary of terms, Bibliography, Images, 3D Graphic Reconstruction, Summary in English, Summary in German).

The webpage is made up of 2 frames: on the left the navigating buttons (Java application) and on the right the actual page that presents the information on 2 columns (text and images). The text makes frequent references to the glossary of terms, to the images, maps and also to bibliography. The

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entire webpage is an interactive multimedia document, made up of text, images, maps, boards and video-movies.

E-PRAETORIUM

The Roman archaeological complex at Praetorium, in the locality Mehadia, Caras-Severin county, is one of the latest sites in Western Romania. After a first attempt of systematic research, dating back to the Second World War, the diggings were resumed by the team of archaeologists led by Prof. Dr. Doina Benea. As a result, the webpage presents the information as grouped on archaeological campaigns and not as a monograph.

The entire project is an interactive multimedia document made up of text, image and sound, realized in Romanian, with a summary in English. The information is presented on 2 columns (text and image), being grouped again in 6 sec-

tions with a historical and archaeological character (General Presentation, Short History, Archaeological Prospections, The Roman Camp, The Vicus, Archaeological Campaigns) and 5 sections with technical character (Content, Glossary of terms, Bibliography, Images, Summary in English).

Although it is a smaller archaeological complex, the Praetorium promises to be, in the light of new discoveries, a point of reference for the Romanian classic archaeology in the region Banat.

¹ Institute for Cultural Memory (CIMEC) http://www.cimec.ro/default_eng.htm and Archaeological Professional Association of Romania (APAR) <http://www.archaeology.ro>.

² Centre of History and Archaeology Studies Timisoara <http://www.uvt.ro/csiatim/index.htm>.

³ Department of IT and Communications <http://www.uvt.ro/> itc.

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